GROWERTALKS

Features

7/1/2024

New for You (and Your Customers)

Chris Beytes, Bill Calkins & Jennifer Zurko

Some trends we spotted this year at our annual late-March trip to “CAST” centered on “solutions,” like always, but some breeders seemed to be taking a new direction. Here are a few:

Large plants and combo programs. In the instant-gratification world we live in today, the market for big patio pots, landscape focal plants and combination planters is important and booming. Companies and their breeding teams have been encouraged to ratchet up the wow factor with big blooms, upright varieties (thrillers) and large-stature plants to fill big (meaning high dollar) pots. Combo programs (whether multi-liner or recipe-based) continue to evolve, and at this stage in the game, they’re quite refined and approaching solutions that work for growers, as well as retailers and end consumers.

Compact plants … but for a reason. Sure, smaller plants coming off the bench allow you to maximize shipping rack space for more efficient trucking, but new compact genetics are really good. They require fewer PGRs to produce, and as long as the branching has been dialed up, garden performance is excellent. They work better in combos and offer tons of benefits to growers in regions where environmental conditions cause crops in production to get out of hand.

Regional positioning. For the past few years, we’ve been impressed by the ongoing “assortment rationalization,” with breeding companies taking their massive assortments of coleus, lantana, begonias, dahlias, calibrachoa, petunias and more that may proliferated into a confusing hodge-podge and carefully sorting them based on timing, pot size and end use. This is the pinnacle of grower-friendliness. And from what we hear, it’s worked well. This year, we heard a lot of regional positioning—based on climate and when crops ship out for spring sales. Perhaps when companies introduce new series to compete with existing market leaders, they’ve carefully studied the competition and determined how to position different sub-series, so they work regionally, and evaluations have been completed to eliminate any guesswork.

Memorable Intros











Angelonia AngelFlare Black (Ball FloraPlant)

There are three total in the new AngelFlare series, including Cranberry and Orchid Pink ... but Black is the love-it-or-hate-it standout. The series has an upright, V-shaped habit.

Lobelia Masterpiece Blue With Eye (Benary)

One of the biggest breakthroughs of all the trials we saw this year is the first-ever F1 hybrid seed lobelia, Masterpiece Blue With Eye. Obviously a challenge to create, otherwise somebody would have done it years ago, Masterpiece is bred to compete with all those vegetative lobelias on the market that are touting durability and heat tolerance. Being from seed, Masterpiece has the benefit of easy storage, no disease risk and a lower price point. Sow three or four seeds per plug for a nice full plant. And, yes, other colors are coming, they say.

Ageratum Monarch Magic (Ball FloraPlant)

Three reasons we thought Monarch Magic was interesting: First, it’s a vegetative ageratum—one of only what, two or three on the market? Which means more vigor than the typical seed ageratum. They tout it as having a trailing habit, even showing it in hanging baskets. And the name indicates its pollinator-friendliness. They even have a logo and some stickers for those who want to promote it on their social channels.

Mandevilla Sun Parasol Bluephoria (Suntory)

We’ve written about these before, when they debuted at TPIE in Ft. Lauderdale in January. Suntory was showing off their new Sun Parasol Mandevilla colors at CAST, as well, most notably Bluephoria, with its unique lavender-blue flowers (they looked more mauve here due to temperature).

Petunia Easy Wave Rose, Navy Velour; E3 Easy Wave Rose Morn (PanAmerican Seed)

Not only were Waves on display at the Grammy Awards this year, but PanAmerican had recreated the red carpet (but in pink) and all sorts of Hollywood-style fanfare. But the stars of the show were the plants—Easy Wave adds Rose and Navy Velour, and E3 gains Rose Morn and three mixes.






SunPatiens Vigorous Purple; Compact Lavender (Sakata)

New in the Vigorous line is Purple, a strong color addition that will quickly find its place in the Northern landscape market. And new in the Compact line are Lavender, a much-requested soft pink color.

Vinca Titan-ium (PanAmerican Seed)

Seed is still one of the best ways to bring cool flowers to market, as PanAmerican hopes to prove with their new Vinca Titan-ium series. Clever name, as it starts with their well-known Titan Vinca series, which has been toughened up with the addition of aerial Phytophthora resistance to become Titan-ium. The series did well in a disease inoculum test they displayed. Is it as tough as class leader Cora? Time in the landscape will tell us. The series starts with seven colors and a mix.

Canna Cannova Gold Leopard (Takii)

This is a seed canna, part of Takii's popular Cannova line, featuring rich yellow flowers speckled with orange. The foliage is bright green. Availability-wise, the seed is exclusive to Ball Seed, but anyone can buy plugs of Gold Leopard ... and why wouldn't you?

Helianthus Sunfinity Double Yellow (Syngenta)

Sunfinity Double Yellow is a vegetative double-flowered helianthus that's a sister to Syngenta's original Sunfinity, which we first saw at CAST in 2019. Smaller-flowered and more golden in color ... and double! Also, being vegetative, it's said to be easier and more grower-friendly. As with the original Sunfinity, there's POP and a website to help support your sales.

Dahlia Black Forest Ruby (Takii)

We see a lot of dahlias at CAST, but we're not sure if we've seen a seed dahlia in years. Correct us if we're wrong, but we were told this is one of only maybe two commercial seed dahlias on the market—and the only dark-leaf seed variety. It has semi-double to double flowers and a final height of about knee-high. It'll work well in quarts to gallons, and more colors are coming.

Petunia Ray Shadow (Danziger)

Ray is an older series that's still popular with growers. Shadow has unusual pale yellow/dusty purple flowers that fade to dusty pink and dusty purple, so it seems like an apt name.

New Annuals Series

Geranium Solera (Ball FloraPlant)

Ball FloraPlant's first series interspecific geraniums, Solera is extremely uniform across all five colors—Red, Lavender, Fuchsia, Orange and Watermelon. Cuttings are produced at their new Mexico farm Yeca Flora and will be trucked to the U.S. border, keeping the cold chain intact, before shipping out to growers across North America.



Vinca Nirvana XDR (Syngenta)

Nirvana XDR is a vegetative sister to the superb Cora XDR vinca, known for its high resistance to multiple strains of aerial Phytophthora (34 isolates at last count!). Nirvana brings novel colors to the class, including Blue Halo, Cranberry Halo, Blackberry and Blush Splash. One note about our photos: Your flowers will be much bigger; these were grown in California in winter.

Calibrachoa MiniFamous Evo (Selecta)

The new Evo series of double-flowered and super compact calibrachoa are perfect for color bowls. The series starts with five colors: White, Red, Yellow, Magenta and Blue.

Verbena Empress Sun Kiss (Dümmen Orange)

Bred to be compact for containers and combos, Empress Sun Kiss was also bred for flowers that pop up far enough above the foliage to stand out more than the more prostrate competitors. They're early to flower, and heat and humidity tolerant. The series launches with Red, White, Blue and Pink. Dümmen is also using Sun Kiss in Confetti combos.

Begonia Beaugonia (Westhoff)

A new tuberous begonia series that features a nice selection of big, frilly flowers in nine strong colors from Westhoff's own breeding. But, interestingly, the series has a connection to Rieger, the German breeder of the famous Rieger begonias. Rieger will be producing URCs of Beaugonia at their German nursery; with more than 100 flights to North America from Frankfurt, availability shouldn't be a problem, they say.

Angelonia Guardian Angel (Ball FloraPlant)

The new extra-tall Guardian Angel Angelonia series is 30% more vigorous than Archangel, they say, and finishes earlier, with huge flowers. Starts in two colors—Blue and Berry Sparkle. One grower told us, "That is what an Angelonia can be when the breeders get over 'grower-friendly' and start to think about consumers."

Dianthus Dart (PanAmerican Seed)

The Dianthus Dart series is super compact without PGRs (compared to their Dianthus Dash) and looks like a nice container plant, with six colors available.



Petunia Shake (Hem)

We know Dutch breeder Hem for their Mambo and Limbo series of multiflora and grandiflora compact petunias from seed, and this year they shook things up a bit—literally. Their new Shake series fits in between the other two in terms of size, but brings in novelty colors—the sort you only see with vegetative petunias, they say. The series starts with Blueberry, Strawberry and Raspberry. Like nearly all the other Hem genetics, they're naturally compact, needing no PGRs.

Salvia Tanami (Westhoff)

This new salvia hybrid series has six colors, including Blue (pictured). Though technically a perennial, Westhoff crossed *S. greggii* with something that helped make it daylength neutral with no vernalization, basically turning it into an annual for late-season shoulder sales.

Geranium Glory Days (Dümmen Orange)

A new interspecific series, Glory Days has ivy-like single flowers and zonal-style foliage. The flowers are big and colorful, in two ivy-style colors: Pink Bicolor and Orange Bicolor. More are on the way, they say.

Calibrachoa Caliloco (Westhoff)

Caliloco, a new collection of calibrachoa, was selected in the same vein as Westhoff's Crazytunias: wild colors and patterns. Caliloco starts with12 new colors and six classics from previous collections. Pictured is Spicy Honey.









Coleus Terra Scape (Kientzler)

Bred by Dr. Dave Clark at the University of Florida, a program has delivered a lot of good sun-loving/part-shade coleus to the market, and they're continuing to do so, now through Kientzler. They showed both upright and mounded types.

Impatiens Sol Luna Prime (Danziger)

The original Sol Luna hybrid impatiens are great, but vigorous for the landscape. Primes are earlier. The new series launches with six colors.

Begonia Birthday Bash (Syngenta)

Birthday Bash is an interesting three-color series. Picture dark fibrous-begonia foliage with double blooms that protrude on trailing stems. Colors are descriptive:

Chocolate Cherry, Raspberry Sherbet and Cream Puff.

Tropica Mandevilla/Dipladenia (Ball FloraPlant)

BFP has reorganized its mandevilla/dipladenia assortment under the “Tropica” umbrella, under which are four series and one collection. Modesto is the compact, bush dipladenia type with Pink, Red and White. Medio is a medium-bush with Strawberry, Red and White. Grande is medium-vining with Pink, Red, Merlot and an improved Citrine. And Grandiosa is the large, vining mandevilla series with Rose Pink and White. Lastly, there’s a collection of novelties called Unico with Fuchsia, Pink, Coral Orange Sunrise and Pink + Yellow.

Petunia BOOM! (Benary)

BOOM! is a seven-color multiflora seed petunia series that compliments Benary’s Success grandiflora series.

Other Notable New & A+ Additions



Lobelia Stratus Blue (Westhoff)

A sister addition to Westhoff’s Hot Lobelia series is Stratus Blue Picotee, said to be the first lobelia with picotee-patterned flowers.

Osteospermum Akila Hawaii Sunset Mixture (PanAmerican Seed)

This was one of our pick items from all of CAST for its tropical sunset range of shades. It’s from seed and part of the Akila series.

Petunia Sweet Sunshine White (Selecta)

It’s always nice to see good double petunias, and this year Selecta added a beautiful pure white to the SweetSunshine collection of well-branched doubles for baskets and big pots.

Petunia Crazytunia Citrus Hill, Secred Star, THE RED! (Westhoff)

Westhoff continue to add new colors to the Crazytunia collection—we believe they said the line is up to 58 now! Additions include Citrus Hill and Secred Star. (And, yes, that’s spelled right—it’s a combination of secret and red.) And you know the retina-burning Hells collection of petunias? It gets a Red ... no, check that. Hells THE RED! We guess they figure nothing will ever get more red.

Impatiens SolarScape XL Lilac Spark, Pink Jewel; White Pearl (PanAmerican Seed)

New additions to the SolarScape interspecific seed series include the standard size (White and Pearl) and the XLs (Lilac Spark and Pink Jewel). Pink Jewel must be a solid performer: it’s an All-America Selections winner for containers and landscapes.

Cordyline Panic Burgundy (Green Fuse)

Green Fuse has their own tissue culture lab and they want to make use of it, so expect more of their products to be available in TC. New offerings include a robust, deep red Cordyline australis called Panic Burgundy. Use it as a spike in a combo or as a focal point in the landscape.

Celosia Burning Embers (Sakata)



An All-America Selections winner for 2024, they say of this winner, it's "bred for its gorgeous bronze foliage with dark pink veins that contrast nicely with the vibrant pink flower plumes. Plants are well-branched and produce more flowers over a longer bloom time."

Echibeckia Summerina Glow Limonata (Pacific Plug & Liner)

The Summerina series of echibeckia from PP&L merges the benefits of rudbeckia and echinacea into a fast-growing and long-lasting Zone-7-to-9 landscape perennial with excellent disease resistance. New Limonata brings a soft yellow color to the collection.

Impatiens Beacon Chicago Mixture, Otway Mixture (PanAmerican Seed)

Impatiens with high resistance to impatiens downy mildew are becoming the only way to go for many growers supplying these shade workhorses for home gardens and landscapes, and Beacon led the way. New for 2025 are two mixes: Chicago—with Violet Shades, White and future a standalone intro called Blue Pearl; and Otway—with Lipstick, Rose and a future color, Light Pink. They are named for lighthouses in Chicago, Illinois, and Victoria, Australia.

Mandevilla Sun Parasol Fired Up Orange; XP Mauvelous, XP Double Pink Blush (Suntory)

FiredUp Orange (pictured) has an upright habit, narrow leaves and vivid orange flowers; Mauvelous offers speckled two-tone flowers and the best habit of any Sun Parasol, they say; and Double Pink Blush has double flowers.

Coleus Downtown Port Fairy, Dallas (Dümmen Orange)

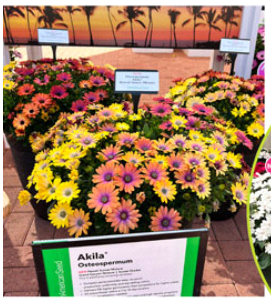
The Downtown Coleus collection adds cities from Australia and Texas to the lineup. Port Fairy is a bright chartreuse with yellow veins, and Dallas is dark burgundy and looked more compact, probably positioned for combos.

Snapdragon Candy Tops Pink Bicolor (Sakata)

The first bicolor in the Candy Tops Snapdragon series is Pink Bicolor, which joins five existing colors in the dwarf pack series.











Pericallis Senetti Blue Spoon (Suntory)

The unique flower form brings out the contrasting blue-and-white colors and comes from the new breeding direction Suntory is following—better stock plants, disease resistance, better branching and higher flower counts.

Viola ColorMax White (Sakata)

ColorMax is Sakata's large-flowered viola series that's basically a multiflora pansy on a tough viola chassis. White, while perhaps boring, is a key addition because it goes into just about every mix.

Catharanthus Soiree Double Pure White (Suntory)

These small-flowered vinca are getting a full overhaul to improve the whole series. Upgrades include Pink Improved, Orchid Improved and a new addition to the series, Pure White.

Gerbera Garvinea Sweet Maggie, Blaze; Cheeky Hot Pink (HilverdaFlorist)

In the standard-sized Sweet collection (good for 2.5-qt. pots) they're adding Sweet Maggie (hot pink) and Sweet Blaze (orange and yellow). And the mini Cheeky series (good for quarts) gets Garvinea Cheeky Hot Pink.

Begonia Viking White on Green (Sakata)

Viking White on Green is part of the interspecific begonia Viking collection. As a refresher, there are three different Vikings—the upright standard, XL (20% bigger) and Explorer (spreading/trailing). Viking White is the first white in the whole series. We expect to see whites in all three sizes eventually.

Calibrachoa Lia Abstract Lemon Cherry (Danziger)

Danziger's calibrachoa assortment is impressive and for 2025 they're introducing at least five. In the Lia series (ideal for hanging baskets, but they'll do great in quarts, too)—Lia Abstract Lemon Cherry was our favorite. They also introduced Lia Chili Pepper, Lia Sky Blue and Lia Spark Lavender.

Petunia SuperCal Premium Rose Star, Rose Pink, Pink Mist; Supercal Shocking Pink (Sakata)

SuperCal Petunias have two lines: the classics called just SuperCal, which are semi-spreading; and SuperCal Premium, which isn't some sort of improvement of SuperCal as the name might suggest, just more upright in habit. Premium gets Pink Mist, Rose Star and Rose Pink; while SuperCal gets the vivid Shocking Pink.

Calibrachoa Calipetite Apricot Dream, Blue Splash (Sakata)

Sakata showed us new Calipetite calibrachoas with unique colors—Apricot Dream and Blue Splash. Remember: Don't hit these with any PGRs! Grow them warm and feed them well, they suggest.

Petunia Capella (Danziger)

Danziger's Marketing & Key Accounts Manager Lisa Heredia called their Capella series, "the perfect petunia," because it's great in propagation and produces compact quart pots, but continues to gain size in the garden for the end consumer. New are some novelties, including Fuchsia Diamond, Fuchsia Lace, Pink Morn and Rim Raspberry.

Verbena Vanessa Bicolor Light Pink (Danziger)

Vanessa Bicolor Light Pink is spreading/sprawling, but has flowers that pop up above the foliage. Of course, it has the same disease-resistant breeding as the rest of the Vanessa series.

Geranium Calliope Large Dark Salmon (Syngenta)

When Syngenta's Calliope interspecific geraniums came to market, they changed the geranium game in a major way. Over the year, subseries have been added, like Calliope Large—big stature Calliope types for huge baskets and patio pots. The Large collection added a core color, Salmon, this year.

Geranium Mojo White Splash (Syngenta)

Like Calliope, Mojo Geraniums are interspecific, but with darker foliage and more of an upright, medium vigor for 1- or 2-qt. pots. A new White Splash joined the series with pink/red centers on bright white blooms. Syngenta showed a lot of Mojos in geranium combos this year, which seems perfect for the plant habit.

Begonia BIG White Bronze Leaf (Benary)

BIG Begonia is one of Benary's key crops, so it was great to see their new White Bronze Leaf. The foliage is about as dark as it can get and the white flowers are bright and clear. The contrast is amazing and the new BIG matches up perfectly with the rest of the series. This is an important addition to the series.



Petunia Dekko (Syngenta)

The vegetative Dekko Petunia series is positioned for in-ground use, although it also works well in containers. The series has key core colors, along with some unique patterns. New for this year are Rose Vein (pictured) and Pinwheel Purple, and the Dekko Maxx (more vigorous, also for landscape applications) subseries adds Pink.

Pansy Delta Pro Fire (Syngenta)

When Syngenta launched the Delta Pro pansy series last year, they upgraded just about all of the colors. Some originals remained as "classics" with the promise of future upgrades to "Pro." Fire was one of these and was released as Delta Pro Fire this year. It's a very popular color (orange and red fiery tones) and is nice to have in the upgraded genetics.

Begonia Nonstop (Benary)

These tuberous begonias have lots of wannabe competitors, but one look at their colorful display shows that Benary still owns the category. New in Nonstops are Lemon, Flame and Peach Shades (these three all have green foliage); and Nonstop Mocca (dark-leaf) Light Pink Shades. And in the Nonstop Joy series (mounding/semi-trailing) comes Mocca Rose.

Yucca Nice & Easy (Plant Development Services, Inc.)

Yucca Nice & Easy has a couple of attributes that take traditional yuccas up a notch. First, it has a beautiful pink tone in the foliage when temps are cooler, giving it a unique look. Next, it's actually soft and not poky like other yuccas. But don't be fooled by the photos: it's not a small plant, growing up to 5-ft. tall.

Dianthus Diana Pro (Hem)

Diana Dianthus gets upgraded to Diana Pro—like the other Hem products, to be more genetically compact and mounding in habit, while still having the same flowering time as the original Diana—15 weeks. **GT**